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COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its eighteenth session

SUMMARY

At its eighteenth session, the Working Group was briefed on the implications for statistics of the United Nations financial crisis (paras. 3-5); followed up the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA) (paras. 6-9); reviewed the work of the inter-agency task forces that had been established by the Statistical Commission in eight subject-matter areas (paras. 10-20 and 26-29); reviewed proposals concerning critical problems in economic statistics (paras. 21-25); reviewed proposals concerning the statistical implications of United Nations summit meetings (paras. 30 and 31); reviewed proposals for future work on international statistical classifications (paras. 32 and 33); reviewed work done to measure the flows of technical cooperation in statistics (paras. 34-36); considered proposals for strengthening the role of the regional commissions in the area of statistics (paras. 37-39); considered efforts made to coordinate statistical data-collection activities (paras. 40 and 41, 44 and 45); considered proposals for gender-related topics for inclusion in national publications (paras. 42 and 43); reviewed a survey of country views on the holding of a world statistics day (paras. 46 and 47); and finalized the provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission (paras. 48-50).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The eighteenth session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission was held in New York from 16 to 18 April 1996. The list of participants is contained in annex I, the list of documents in annex II and the agenda in annex III.

2. Following previous practice and in accordance with the decision made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session (27 February-3 March 1995), the officers elected at the twenty-eighth session who attended the Working Group meeting served as its officers, as follows: Chairman - W. McLennan (Australia); Vice-Chairman - Zhang Sai (China); Rapporteur - C. Denell (Sweden).

I. IMPLICATIONS FOR STATISTICS OF THE UNITED NATIONS FINANCIAL CRISIS

3. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of an oral report made by the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division. The Director informed the meeting of the twofold nature of the United Nations financial situation, involving (a) a cash flow problem (because of lack of payment of dues owed by some Member States) and (b) a budgetary problem (because the General Assembly had decided to reduce the budget of the Secretariat by approximately 8 per cent for the 1996-1997 biennium). That affected both Headquarters and the regional commissions.

4. The Director also informed the Working Group that the Statistics Division was sustaining vacancies and anticipated additional vacancies that would not be filled due to the freeze in recruitment, which would have an impact on programme implementation. The areas that would be seriously affected were: (a) the environment statistics programme: the position of chief of the Environment Statistics Section that would become vacant in the course of the year would not be filled; and (b) the demographic and social statistics programme: while the strengthening and revitalization of the programme had been initiated to incorporate disability and gender statistics into the work of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch, the posts that were intended to be redeployed might not be available, and in addition, the position of Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch (a D-1-level post) would remain vacant for an indefinite period. The Director further stated that the Statistics Division envisaged a 10 per cent reduction in discretionary expenditures, while the regional commissions had also indicated that they would have similar problems.

Action taken by the Working Group

5. The Working Group:

(a) Understood that the situation was still uncertain and that any further developments in that regard would be communicated to the Working Group;

(b) Agreed that the situation should be kept under review, and that the Statistical Commission should be briefed at its twenty-ninth session;

(c) Urged that any cut-backs that might become necessary, as well as their consequences, should be considered immediately, since there was nothing to be gained by waiting until the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, 1993

6. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a report by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.2, annex) and three background notes (see annex II). The representative of the Statistics Division - the Chairman of ISWGNA - introduced the report.

Action taken by the Working Group

7. The Working Group welcomed the elaboration by ISWGNA of a set of milestones as useful criteria against which progress in the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA) at the country level could be judged. It also took note of the work already undertaken by the Statistics Division and the regional commissions to use those milestones in assessing the current state of SNA implementation in individual countries.

8. The Working Group asked ISWGNA to provide in its report to the Statistical Commission the updated results of the country assessment exercise, paying attention to different needs and priorities of subregional country groupings. It furthermore asked ISWGNA to formulate a range of options for accelerating the process for the Statistical Commission to consider; those options would refer to targets for SNA implementation to be pursued at the global and regional levels, thereby identifying more clearly the anticipated implications for statistical support, while recognizing that SNA implementation remained a matter for individual countries.

9. The Working Group also asked the Statistics Division and the regional commissions to validate the outcome of the needs assessment survey carried out by the regional commissions. In the light of the results of that survey, the Working Group invited ISWGNA to review at its forthcoming meetings its planned outputs and activities, as well as its research agenda, in order to identify priority areas and topics that were posing special difficulties. The Working Group asked ISWGNA to continue reporting to the Statistical Commission in the form of consolidated tables on the entire range of its support activities. The Working Group re-emphasized the importance of making the official language versions of the 1993 SNA available to countries as soon as possible; particular concern was voiced about the Russian language version.

III. WORK OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCES

A. Task Force on International Trade Statistics

10. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of the report of the Task Force (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3, para. 4); an oral report made by the representative of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Convener of the Task Force; and a background note (see annex II). The Convener reported on progress on improved data sharing between the Statistics Division and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); common sourcing of data by the Statistics Division, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Statistical Office of the European Community (Eurostat); the exchange of estimates for the trade of countries that did not report trade data to the international organizations; overall reporting of countries to the Statistics Division; adjustment to nationally reported data to improve international comparability; revision of the international recommendations for concepts and definitions for international trade statistics; globalization/establishment trade; price and volume indexes for international trade, and technical assistance.

Action taken by the Working Group

11. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the results achieved by the Task Force;

(b) Urged the Task Force, in the interests of ensuring more consistent international trade data, to promote greater standardization in the treatment of confidentiality, exchange-rate conversions and the basis for designating partners in international trade;

(c) Requested the Task Force to identify appropriate and practical ways to present the revised concepts and definitions, and to provide compilation advice to countries;

(d) Encouraged the Task Force to provide input into the revision of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) to ensure that statistical concerns were adequately taken into account;

(e) Endorsed the outline of the proposed report to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

B. Task Force on Services Statistics

12. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of an oral report made by the representative of OECD, Convener of the Task Force. The Convener referred to reports on the last two meetings of the Task Force, and reported that the Task Force had decided that current circumstances did not favour proceeding with the production of a yearbook on trade in services, but that it

would produce instead a manual on trade in services and had agreed on an outline.

Action taken by the Working Group

13. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the results achieved by the Task Force;

(b) Emphasized the need for the manual on international trade in services that the Task Force had begun to prepare, and stressed that it should be consistent with the IMF Balance of Payments Manual;

(c) Requested the Task Force to report to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session on each of the requests that the Commission had made at its twenty-eighth session, and noted that the Task Force intended to make a recommendation to the Commission on future arrangements for work in its area of expertise.

C. Task Force on Finance Statistics

14. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of an oral report made by the representative of IMF, Convener of the Task Force. The Convener reported on progress in addressing the recommendations of the Statistical Commission on the item at its twenty-eighth session, as follows:

(a) The Task Force, in consultation with countries, had found that problems of overlapping and duplication in the reporting of data by countries to international organizations were limited. Joint reporting of balance of payments statistics and coordination between OECD and IMF on government revenue statistics were two areas where that problem had been addressed;

(b) The need for consistent standards in methodology between the 1993 SNA and the specialized statistical systems maintained by IMF had been partially met with the revision and publication of the fifth edition of the IMF Balance of Payments Manual;

(c) Work by IMF on its new Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics was at an advanced stage. An expert group meeting of financial statisticians was to be held in Washington in the third quarter of 1996 to finalize the Manual, which would also feature harmonized links with the 1993 SNA. Publication was planned for late 1996 or early 1997;

(d) Harmonization between government finance statistics and the SNA was also a priority, but that work was at a less advanced stage. It involved revising the existing Manual on Government Finance Statistics, which needed to take into account some changes in the basis of recording. However, an annotated outline was currently being finalized and would be circulated for comments within a few months.

Action taken by the Working Group

15. The Working Group approved the work done and requested the Task Force to submit a further progress report to the Statistical Commission at its next session.

D. Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics

16. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of an oral report made by the representative of OECD, Convener of the Task Force. The Convener reported on the accomplishments in relation to the requests of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session, which were:

(a) To distribute technical materials to countries for the conversion from the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 2 (ISIC, Rev.2) to ISIC, Rev.3;

(b) To create a hot line to the Statistics Division to handle queries and other related work so as to promote the conversion process;

(c) To revise the existing International Recommendations for Construction Statistics;

(d) To continue the work of the Task Force on users and uses of industrial statistics.

Action taken by the Working Group

17. The Working Group:

(a) Noted the progress of the Statistics Division on drafting operational guidelines to link time-series based on ISIC, Rev.2 and ISIC, Rev.3, with the help of volunteer countries;

(b) Noted that the Task Force would prepare a progress report on its work, including, if possible, the results of a survey of country practices on the classification of the statistical unit, for submission to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

E. Task Force on Environment Statistics

18. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a report prepared by the Statistics Division (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3/Add.1) and two background notes (see annex II). A representative of the Statistics Division, Convener of the Task Force, introduced the report.

Action taken by the Working Group

19. The Working Group stressed the importance of environment statistics as a high-priority topic. It welcomed the preliminary background document, summarizing information received from Task Force members and selected non-governmental organizations. The Working Group endorsed the proposed outline for the report to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session, and stressed that the report should present the work programmes of the different organizations, identify gaps and describe major strategic dimensions or goals of international work in the field of environment statistics. As previously requested by the Statistical Commission, the report should also provide milestones against which progress could be measured. The Task Force was requested to define such milestones and provide the required information for inclusion in the report.

F. General comments on the task forces

Action taken by the Working Group

20. The Working Group:

(a) Expressed regret that several of the task forces had provided only oral reports to the Working Group;

(b) Requested that, in future, the task forces submit written reports that while brief, would indicate progress in the tasks that had been assigned to them by the Statistical Commission or its Working Group;

(c) Restated its previous requests to the Secretariat to submit integrated reports that systematically addressed all the issues relevant to a particular agenda item in a single document;

(d) Decided that, for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission, an overall assessment should be carried out of the results of the task force initiative, in relation to the terms of reference of the task forces.

IV. CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN ECONOMIC STATISTICS

A. Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics

21. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of the report of the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.13 and Add.1) and three background notes (see annex II). A representative of Australia, who had served as Chairman of the Expert Group, introduced the report.

Action taken by the Working Group

22. The Working Group commended the Expert Group for its report, in which it had analysed the discussion of critical issues. The Working Group reviewed the issue/activity matrix presented in the report and suggested amendments and extensions, which are reflected in the table below. The Working Group requested the Expert Group to redraft its report in order to reflect discussions and decisions taken by the Working Group and submit it to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

23. The Working Group agreed with the proposal of the Expert Group to initiate informal consultation groups in order to address some of the issues identified. It requested those groups to have a clearly specified focus and to make their workings open and transparent. It also decided that their continued existence would depend upon decisions of the Statistical Commission. The Statistical Division offered its services to promote knowledge of those groups and make their findings widely accessible. The Working Group noted that several countries and international organizations had volunteered to take the lead in advancing issues identified in the table. The Chairman of the Working Group agreed to write to countries in order to inform them about and solicit wider participation in those informal groups. The newly formed groups, as well as some of the existing groups, were invited to report back to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session (for details, see columns 5, 6 and 7 of the table).

24. The Working Group assessed the need for a comprehensive review of the International Comparison Programme (ICP), and asked the Statistical Division to work with the World Bank and a number of countries to elaborate suitable terms of reference for one or several consultants to conduct such a review (for details, see the table).

25. The Working Group noted that the Expert Group's two proposals - (a) to systematically analyse the implications for economic statistics of recent major United Nations conferences and (b) to better articulate the research agenda of ISWGNA - had been taken up under agenda items 7, "Statistical implications of United Nations summit meetings" and 4, "Implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA)".

B. Task Force on Price Statistics including the International Comparison Programme

26. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of the report of the Task Force (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3, annex III). The representative of Eurostat, Convener of the Task Force, introduced the report.

Action taken by the Working Group

27. The Working Group:

(a) Concluded that the Task Force had fulfilled its mandate, and agreed with the recommendation of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities that the Task Force be discontinued (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.12, para. 9);

(b) Noted that remaining issues of interest in price statistics and the evaluation of progress in ICP had been taken up by the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics.

V. STATISTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT MEETINGS

A. Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty

28. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of the report of the Task Force (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3, annex I). The representative of the World Bank, Convener of the Task Force, introduced the report.

Action taken by the Working Group

29. The Working Group:

(a) Agreed with the conclusion of the Task Force that it was not the function of the Statistical Commission to develop international standards for the definition of poverty; it therefore accepted the Task Force recommendation that the Task Force be discontinued;

(b) Considered, however, that further technical work could and should be done at the regional and international levels on the various methods used to measure poverty, and on the data requirements that the various approaches implied. It therefore agreed to consider the formation of an expert group to pursue that work in its consideration of the report of the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences (see para. 31 (e) below).

B. Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences

30. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of the report of the Expert Group (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4, annex) and three background notes (see annex II). The representative of Sweden, who had served as Rapporteur of the Expert Group, introduced the Report.

Action taken by the Working Group

31. The Working Group:

(a) Supported the overall emphasis in the report on strengthening national capacities for collecting and reporting social statistics and indicators in general, in the context of ensuring the availability of appropriate statistics and indicators for monitoring implementation of the social programmes of action adopted at recent major United Nations conferences;

(b) Agreed that the report of the Expert Group should be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session, and recommended that the Commission adopt the minimum national social data set, as contained in paragraph 97 of the report. The minimum national social data set should be understood as a guide to national statistical services in considering data requirements for monitoring the implementation of the social programmes agreed to at recent major United Nations conferences;

(c) Took note of the proposal of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that the proposed indicator, "Percentage of infants weighing less than 2,500 g at birth by sex", be replaced in the minimum national social data set by an indicator, "Contraceptive prevalence rate", pursuant to the objectives adopted by the International Conference of Population and Development (see E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4 para. 17), and requested that that proposal be brought to the attention of the Statistical Commission. The Working Group also noted that the World Health Organization (WHO) wished to retain the infant weight indicator since that indicator could indicate the quality of reproductive health;

(d) Requested the Statistics Division to work with the regional commissions to arrange for pilot studies in each region on the availability and quality of the statistics called for in the minimum national social data set. The Statistics Division was to report to the Chairman of the Working Group before the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission on progress towards completing the pilot studies. The Working Group also requested the Statics Division to prepare a report to synthesize regional results and identify reporting mechanisms and approaches that might be useful in all regions;

(e) Agreed to recommend the formation of an expert group on poverty statistics, and welcomed the offers of Brazil to serve as Chair and of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to serve as secretariat. It also welcomed the offers of Australia, Mexico, South Africa, the United States of America, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to participate. Other countries and agencies were to be invited to join;

(f) Welcomed the offer of ECLAC to host a seminar on poverty statistics in Santiago in 1997, focusing on national and regional experiences, with national and regional inputs from each region, and requested the other regional commissions to cooperate with ECLAC in preparing the seminar.

VI. INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

32. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.5) and three background notes (see annex II).

Action taken by the Working Group

33. The Working Group:

(a) Commended the Statistics Division for the work completed, and considered that the initiatives planned were consistent with the decisions taken by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session;

(b) Endorsed the work programme on international economic and social classifications, and agreed that the Statistics Division should finalize the draft of the proposed changes to the correspondence tables of ISIC, Rev.2 and Rev.3, and the explanatory notes of ISIC, Rev.3, for submission to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session;

(c) Requested the Statistics Division to submit the report of the Second Expert Group Meeting on International Classifications (scheduled for 24-26 June 1996) to the Statistical Commission for its review;

(d) Agreed that the work of the Statistics Division on the revised list of products and materials based on the Classification of the New European Industrial Production Statistics (PRODCOM) for the collection of industrial commodity production statistics should continue.

VII. TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN STATISTICS

34. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General on technical cooperation in statistics, which described the steps that had been taken to prepare a report for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.6). The Working Group was briefed on the status of the response to requests for information on technical cooperation and the stage reached in the preparation of the report.

35. The Working Group noted the difficulties faced by the Statistics Division in preparing the report on technical cooperation in statistics, and was disappointed to learn that the response rate to the request for information had so far been very low. The Working Group also suggested that a qualitative approach might advance the discussion of efficiency in technical assistance.

Action taken by the Working Group

36. The Working Group:

(a) Decided that the Statistics Division should continue preparing the report on technical cooperation in statistics, and should submit it to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session;

(b) Requested Statistics Canada, Eurostat and IMF to work with the Statistics Division to include in that report coverage of crucial issues related to technical cooperation.

VIII. ROLE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

37. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of two background notes, one prepared by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) containing inputs from ECE, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and one prepared by ECLAC (see annex II).

38. The Working Group acknowledged and stressed the need to strengthen the regional commissions, including their capacity to carry out necessary coordination with countries. It was also noted that the reduction in resources due to the financial situation of the United Nations system was constraining regional commissions from implementing their work programmes. It was pointed out that the Bureau of each regional conference of statisticians was an effective instrument for strengthening regional statistical conferences. The Working Group also noted that member countries of the Statistical Commission, through the use of appropriate channels, could greatly influence what happened to the regional commissions.

Action taken by the Working Group

39. The Working Group requested ECE to take the lead in integrating and updating the two background notes, in consultation with the other regional commissions, in order to include the points raised during the discussion by the Working Group, and to submit the revised report for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

IX. COORDINATION OF STATISTICAL DATA-COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

40. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.9) reviewing the updated inventory of statistical data-collection activities.

Action taken by the Working Group

41. The Working Group noted with satisfaction the work done by the Statistics Division in updating the inventory of statistical data-collection activities, which was very important for coordination purposes.

X. GENDER-RELATED TOPICS FOR INCLUSION IN NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

42. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.10) that listed a number of gender-related topics of broad national and international interest that might be covered in national publications on a rotating basis.

Action taken by the Working Group

43. The Working Group took note of the report and expressed its appreciation for the comprehensiveness of the topics listed. It also noted that the topics would present varying degrees of difficulty and priority in country work, and suggested that any future version of the list might note some of those differences.

XI. STATISTICAL SUPPORT FOR POLICY ANALYSIS ISSUES AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

44. The Working Group considered the matter on the basis of an oral report by the representative of IMF, the Chairman of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its twenty-ninth session, and paragraph 16 of the report of the Subcommittee (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.12). Two main issues were involved: (a) the duplication caused by demands to national statistical offices ensuing from both statistical and non-statistical units of international organizations, and (b) the anomaly of international agencies, having responded to specific policy needs by collecting and disseminating data, continuing to do so after those original policy needs had expired.

Action taken by the Working Group

45. The Working Group requested the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities to review further what the organizations had already achieved and what further gains might be achieved in the coordination of statistical data collection from countries. To help focus the review, the Working Group urged national statistical offices to report to the Statistics Division, recent instances of duplicative requests for data by international organizations.

XII. WORLD STATISTICS DAY

46. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.11) which described the results of a survey of countries on their views about holding a World Statistics Day.

Action taken by the Working Group

47. The Working Group requested the Statistics Division to revise the document to reflect the range of views expressed during the discussion and submit it to the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

XIII. PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

48. The Working Group considered the item on the basis of a note by the Secretariat (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.8 and Add.1, and a supplementary note) and a background note containing proposals for the provisional agenda and documentation of the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission (see annex II).

49. The Working Group decided to add the following items to the agenda of the twenty-ninth session of the Commission, with documentation as indicated:

(a) World Statistics Day

Documentation

Report by the Statistics Division;

(b) Role of the regional commissions

Documentation

Report by ECE, in consultation with the other regional commissions;

(c) Review of efforts to strengthen international statistical cooperation

Documentation

Report to be prepared jointly by Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands, ECLAC and ECE;

(d) Review of the inter-agency task forces

Documentation

Report by the Statistics Division, with input from the task forces, on the mandates, functioning and achievements of the task forces.

50. The Working Group noted that it had approved outlines under other agenda items for many of the documents for the twenty-ninth session of the Commission. The Working Group made decisions concerning the remaining documents as follows:

(a) Agenda item 12 (a), "Demographic and social statistics: 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme". The Working Group noted that the draft recommendations for the Programme would be before the Commission;

(b) Agenda item 12 (b), "Demographic and social statistics: demographic, social and migration statistics". The Working Group noted that the draft recommendations for migration statistics would be available, but the outline of the report requested might be different from that originally proposed by the Secretariat;

(c) Agenda item 14, "Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes": The Working Group agreed to the outlines proposed by the Secretariat;

(d) Agenda item 15, "Programme questions and related matters". The Working Group considered the proposals made by the Secretariat and decided to discontinue both the report of the Secretary-General containing updated information on the work of the Statistics Division and the report of the Secretary-General on the overall review of the work of the international organizations in statistics. However, the Working Group decided to retain the report on plans of international organizations in statistics, and also approved the proposed outline of the report on the draft programme of work of the Statistics Division for the biennium 1998-1999.

XIV. DATES, VENUE AND AGENDA OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION

51. The Working Group recommended that its nineteenth session be held from 10 to 13 February 1998 in New York.

52. The Working Group approved the following provisional agenda for its nineteenth session, subject to amendment by decisions to be made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session (10-14 February 1997):

(a) Implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993;

(b) Work of the inter-agency task forces;

(c) Provisional agenda and documentation for the thirtieth session of the Statistical Commission.

Issue/activity matrix

Concern	Issue	Existing process		Proposed processes		Document for Stat.Com. 97
		Activity	By whom	Activities	By whom	
Coverage, periodicity, timeliness						
1. What activities are proper for a statistical office to undertake and which of them increase its credibility?	A. Good behaviour B. Effective communication with stake holders			Develop draft code of best practice for official statistics for consideration by Stat.Com.	UK, USA, Mexico, IMF and others	Draft code of best practice
2. What problems of coverage are created by changes in the policy environment?	C. Devolution and deregulation			Countries share research/experience	Informal ad hoc group; Convener (to be determined), Eurostat, and others to participate	Progress report
	D. Regional statistics	Development of handbook on regional accounts	Eurostat	Promulgate handbook on regional accounts	ISWGNA	
3. What problems of coverage are created by changes in economic organization?	E. Informal sector	Consultancies on Africa/Asia; work in transition countries; methodological work	UNSD, Eurostat/OECD, ILO	Status report and proposals for future work	UNSD, in collaboration with the ILO, Eurostat, the regional commissions; country input, as appropriate	Status report and proposals for future work
	F. Globalization	Research on trade not passing through customs barriers; foreign affiliates trade; subcontracting across countries; attribution of production of multinational enterprises to countries	OECD/Eurostat	Improved coordination, especially with WTO, WCO, UNSD, IMF, UNCTAD.	OECD, Eurostat	
				Prepare paper on Canadian experience in developing globalization measures	Canada, in collaboration with OECD	Information paper
Quality, relevance						
4. How should we measure wealth, output and productivity?	G. Capital			Countries share research/experience	Informal ad hoc group; Convener: Australia. France, World Bank and others to participate	Progress report
	H. Resource accounting	Countries share research/experience	London group, in collaboration with Nairobi group, as appropriate	Prepare progress report	London group	Progress report
	I. Prices	Countries share research/experience	Ottawa group	Prepare progress report	Ottawa group	Progress report
	J. Quality of labour	Countries share research/experience	Voorburg group	Prepare progress report	Voorburg group	Progress report

Concern	Issue	Existing process		Proposed processes		Document for Stat.Com. 97
		Activity	By whom	Activities	By whom	
	K. Labour and compensation			Countries share research/experience	Informal ad hoc group; Convener: France. Australia, the ILO and others to participate	Progress report
	L. Intangibles/ information economics a/			Prepare 'scoping paper'	UK, USA, Canada	Scoping paper
5. Is it necessary to aggregate across countries, and if so, how should it be done?	M.ICP.	Extensive ongoing programme	Stat. Com.	Develop draft terms of reference and list of possible consultants for programme evaluation of ICP. If programme evaluation to proceed, steering committee to be appointed by chair of Stat. Com.	UNSO, World Bank, USA and others	Discussion paper
6. What is required to signal the need for short-term intervention?	N. Quality short-term economic indicators	Surveillance system	IMF	Country implementation	National statistical offices, central banks, ministries	

OECD = Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
ISWGNA = Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts
Stat.Com. = United Nations Statistical Commission
UNCTAD = United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
IMF = International Monetary Fund (IMF)
WTO = World Trade Organization (WTO)
WCO = World Customs Organization
ILO = International Labour Organization
ICP = International Comparison Programme
Eurostat = Statistical Office of the European Community
UNSD = United Nations Statistical Division

a/ Description to be clarified by Expert Group.

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Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members

Australia	W. McLennan T. Skinner R. Edwards P. Harper
Botswana	G. M. Charumbira
Brazil	S. Schwartzman L. Fernandes Silva M. Arieira
China	Zhang Sai Lin Xianyu Feng Nailin
Japan	H. Kudo S. Watanabe R. Imai M. Nishizawa
Mexico	M. Palma E. Ordaz
Russian Federation	V. Sokolin
Sweden	C. Denell
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	T. Holt J. Pullinger
United States of America	K. Wallman S. Evinger

Observers

Canada	J. Ryten B. Prigly
France	H. Ladsous M. Oblin J. L. Bodin P. Delacroix
Netherlands	W. F. M. de Vries
South Africa	F. M. Orkin

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations Statistics Division	H. Habermann O. Jackson P. Bartelmus V. Drjuchin C. Hannig R. Johnston R. Roberts S. Schweinfest J. Vanek
Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, Micro-analysis Division	A. Horn
Economic Commission for Europe	T. J. Griffin W. Scott
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	P. Sainz
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Committee on Statistics	F. W. H. Ho
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	J. Richtering
United Nations Development Programme	John E. S. Lawrence
United Nations Population Fund	C. S. Pierce M. Vlassoff
United Nations Environment Programme	A. Singh

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization	F. Mehran
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	L. O. Larson
World Health Organization	H. R. Hapsara
World Bank	M. Ward
International Monetary Fund	J. McLenaghan S. Quin
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	R. Ballance

Other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	M. Korolev
International Statistical Institute	Z. E. Kenessey
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	L. Kincannon
Statistical Office of the European Community	Y. Franchet J. Whitworth
World Trade Organization	J.-M. Leger

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document symbol	Agenda item	Title or description
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.1	2	Provisional annotated agenda
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.2	4	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts on the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.3 and Add.1	5	Note by the Secretary-General on the work of the inter-agency task forces
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4	7	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.5	8	Note by the Secretary-General on the work programme on international economic and social classification
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.6	9	Note by the Secretary-General on technical cooperation in statistics
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.7	-	Not issued
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.8 and Add.1, and supplementary note	11	Note by the Secretariat containing proposals for the provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.9	12	Note by the Secretary-General on the coordination of statistical data-collection activities
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.10	13	Note by the Secretary-General on gender-related topics for inclusion in national publications
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.11	15	Note by the Secretary-General on the summary results of a survey of countries to explore the possible establishment of a world statistics day
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.12	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15	Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its twenty-ninth session

Document symbol	Agenda item	Title or description
E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.13 and Add.1	6	Note by the Secretariat transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics
-	4	Background note entitled: "SNA implementation plans and needs: tables and regional analyses"
-	4	Background note: past, present and projected future implementation of the SNA in individual countries
-	4	Background note: SNA News and Notes, No. 3 (Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, January 1996)
-	5	Background note: report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics (Rome, 8-10 May 1995)
-	5	Background note: summary of information received from the members of the Task Force on Environment Statistics
-	5	Background note: synopsis of programmes and activities in environmental statistics, indicators and accounting
-	6	Background note by the International Monetary Fund: report of the Executive Board to the Interim Committee on data provision and surveillance and standards to guide members in the provision of data to the public (Washington, D.C., 29 September 1995)
-	6	Background note by the International Monetary Fund on the Special Data Dissemination Standard
-	6	International Monetary Fund press release, No. 96/18, entitled "IMF Board approves the Special Data Dissemination Standard"
-	7	Background note: information on United Nations Common Data System Task Force

Document symbol	Agenda item	Title or description
-	7	Background note: report of the first meeting of the United Nations Common Data System Task Force (New York, 14 and 15 February 1996)
-	7	Background note: common code of statistical practice in the United Nations system
-	8	Background note: proposed changes to correspondence tables 1 and 2 and the explanatory notes of ISIC, Rev.3
-	8	Background note: classifications hot line
-	8	Background note: revised list of selected industrial products and materials for use in the area of international industrial commodity production statistics
-	10	Background note by ECE, ESCWA and ESCAP on the role of the regional commissions in statistics
-	10	Background note by ECLAC on the role of the regional commissions in statistics
-	11	Background note containing proposals for the provisional agenda and documentation of the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission

Annex III

AGENDA

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Implications for statistics of the United Nations financial crisis.
4. Implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA).
5. Work of the inter-agency task forces.
6. Critical problems in economic statistics.
7. Statistical implications of United Nations summit meetings.
8. International classifications.
9. Technical cooperation in statistics.
10. Role of the regional commissions.
11. Provisional agenda and documentation for the twenty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission.
12. Coordination of statistical data-collection activities.
13. Gender-related topics for inclusion in national publications.
14. Statistical support for policy analysis issues at the international level.
15. World statistics day.
16. Dates and venue of the nineteenth session.
17. Report of the Working Group on its eighteenth session.